



Arlington Council on Aging

Agenda

Date: Thursday May 21, 2020

Time: 6:00 pm

Location: Due to COVID-19 Pandemic, this meeting will be conducted virtually via Zoom, following the rules set forth by the Governor's Executive Order on Remote Participation.

These meetings are open to the public and all are welcome. Please call 781-316-3401 or e-mail KShah@town.arlington.ma.us for the link to join the virtual meeting which can be accessed by computer with internet access or by telephone for audio access only.

Kristine Shah, Executive Director

Michael Quinn, Chair

Marge Vanderhill, Secretary

Claire Foley, ASA Liaison

The Council's primary responsibilities are to design, promote, and implement programs and services to address the needs of the community's elder population, and to coordinate existing services in the community.

1. Call to order
2. Citizen's Open Forum
3. Minutes of the February 20, 2020 meeting for approval
4. Executive Director's Report
5. Report of the Chair
6. Minuteman Senior Services Report: Marge Vanderhill
7. ASA Liaison Report: Claire Foley
8. Old Business
9. New Business
10. Adjourn

Next meeting: June 18, 2020

Executive Director's Report

Kristine Shah

COA response to COVID-19 Pandemic

I. Main Priorities

a. Nutrition and Food Access

- i. Arlington EATS, Council on Aging, Arlington Public Schools, MRC and Food Link continue to work together during the pandemic to get Arlington residents access to food safely. Since mid-March, this team has worked to assemble a home delivery only model in order to keep residents safe and not needing to leave the house to access food. Currently 250-260 households are being served per week with grocery delivery; this is a 60% increase in the number of families EATS served pre-COVID. Additionally, more than 200 families per week are being delivered 7 days worth of breakfast and lunch through the Public Schools food service program. **Over 70% of the weekly grocery deliveries are to seniors.** The current process for residents to follow is: Call the food resource hotline 781-316-3400 and leave a message or fill out the online form at <https://www.arlingtoneats.org/requestfood/>. Phone calls are returned by a COA Staff member or volunteer to schedule their food delivery and ask about their dietary needs and preferences. Individualized grocery lists are created and filled by Arlington EATS and deliveries are made on Tuesdays, Wednesdays or Fridays each week by MRC and EATS volunteers who have been trained and follow specific safety protocols for each delivery. Groceries include items from Greater Boston Food Bank, Food Link, and community member donations. Current challenges include securing delivery windows from Greater Boston Food Bank each week in order for EATS to have enough food to meet needs. EATS is also working with Google volunteers to develop a more efficient online system for tracking and inputting food orders from residents.

b. Outreach & Emotional Support

- i. COA staff, social workers and volunteers have a designated list of older adults in Arlington that they call weekly to check in with. These are all adults who have little to no access to e-mail or technology. If you know of an older adult in Arlington who could benefit from a weekly phone call, please call 781-316-3400.
- ii. The COA has collected and distributed over 2,000 handsewn fabric masks to seniors in Arlington. They were first delivered to all 750 residents in the senior housing facilities, then distributed through the grocery delivery program, then to densely populated apartment buildings in town and to the APD to distribute. The COA is now filling delivering masks upon request when an individual in need reaches out.
- iii. Sharing art, cards and greetings go a long way to support the more isolated in our community. Working together with community volunteers, we launched a collection of art, cards, pictures and friendly greetings to share with older residents in the community. Anyone from the community can upload their art so it can be safely be printed in the COA office and delivered to the most vulnerable. This has been ongoing since early April.
- iv. Pre-approved COA volunteers who are not in the high risk population for COVID-19 have been mobilized to grocery shop, pick up prescriptions and run essential errands for high risk individuals.

c. Virtual Programs

- i. Fitness Classes: Live exercise and chair yoga classes are conducted via zoom on Monday, Wednesday & Fridays. Recorded tai chi classes air weekly on ACMI. Almost 50 individuals attend the weekly zoom fitness classes. These virtual classes have allowed the majority of our fitness instructors to continue to receive their paycheck.
- ii. Other programming: Sing, intergenerational book club, LGBTQ+, and other social groups have moved their monthly meetings to zoom and are growing weekly.
- iii. Large group virtual concerts/events are scheduled for June and July and will be widely promoted to lift spirits while people are housebound. These programs include a virtual baseball event with Howie Newman and a "Beatles and Beyond" concert with Roger Tinknell.
- iv. The following other programs/services have been adapted to work virtually (using zoom or phone) and are continuing during the pandemic: SHINE assistance/appointments, Legal assistance/appointments, Social Work appointments, Fuel Assistance, SNAP applications, Housing Authority Application assistance, DART program and relationship with taxi company for emergency transportation needs, Sanborn transportation arrangements.

d. Partnerships

- i. The COA is having weekly/bi-weekly meetings with the following organizations to coordinate and partner on response to the COVID-19 pandemic: Minuteman Senior Services, MCOA, EOEA, Housing Corporation of Arlington, Arlington Housing Authority, AARP, Arlington EATS, Food Link, and others.

e. Challenges

- i. Equal access to technology to access programs and services during pandemic. COA has been working together with regional partners and grant funders to hopefully create access to internet and technology for individuals who need it in the near future.
- ii. AARP Tax prep update

f. COA Staff & Outlook

- i. The staff team has learned to work remotely and stay productive, efficient and relevant, outside of the office, extremely quickly. Some are assisting the Board of Health with contact tracing. I am proud of their efforts and the amount of extra hours they have worked since this pandemic was sprung on us in March. Just a week before we had to shut down we were meeting with 96 seniors explaining the details for off-site programming during our renovation to become the Arlington Community Center. We had our offsite programming for exactly one week before the pandemic hit and our world was turned upside down.
- ii. On May 11, only about 6 weeks after it was originally scheduled to begin, contractors arrived at 27 Maple St. to begin construction. The 2nd floor and first floor construction will now happen simultaneously, followed by the ground floor. We were excited to announce this to our clients and are looking forward to the new beginnings that this construction represents.